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Kingdom coming: the Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862.

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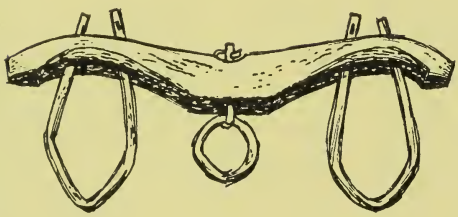

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BELL IRVIN WILEY

KINGDOM COMING

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CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY·1963

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KINGDOM COMING

The Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862

An Address Delivered at the Chicago Historical Society, September 21, 1962 by

BELL IRVIN WILEY

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY—1963

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INTRODUCING MR. WILEY

Chicagoans have precedent for marking the one hundredth anniversary of the Proclamation of Emancipation. When the fiftieth anniversary was observed in this city hundreds could not find seats in Orchestra Hall to hear the speaker of the occasion, W. E. B. DuBois, then director of publications for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. From newspaper accounts of the day I have counted eight organizations which held commemorative exercises, including the seventh ward Progressive Club, where Charles E. Merriam announced that had Lincoln been alive in 1912 he would have been a member of the Progressive Party; and the Chicago Historical Society, which filled its lecture hall with 700 Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls.

So there was no question about observing this centennial. Nor was there any question about our speaker. It took little reflection to turn our choice to Bell Irvin Wiley, Professor of History at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. We did not invite Mr. Wiley because he is a Southerner—born in the South, educated in the South (except for two years of graduate work at Yale), and a teacher all his professional life in Southern colleges and universities. We invited him because in his practice of the historian's craft he has always demonstrated the quality of impartiality. If his two best known books be considered—The Life of Johnny Reb *and* The Life of Billy

Yank—*the one a study of the ordinary Confederate soldier, the other a study of his counterpart in the Union armies, I defy anyone to say, an* prima facie *evidence, whether the author was a Southerner, a Northerner, or a man from Mars.*

I do not know what Mr. Wiley will say tonight. I think it possible that he will make some comments with which not all of us will agree. If that should be the case, I would like to impress upon you a conviction that comes from a long friendship. Whatever Bell Wiley says will be honest, considered, the product of an urbane mind, and the expression of a humane man.

Paul M. Angle
Director, Chicago Historical Society

Kingdom Coming
The Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862

Issuance of the preliminary emancipation proclamation on September 22, 1862, was not a sudden or impulsive act but rather the fruition of developments dating back to the beginning of the Civil War and beyond. Granted that the war which began at Fort Sumter was to be long—and the earnestness and might of the contestants precluded a short conflict—slavery had to be one of the casualties. The booming of the signal cannon at Charleston on April 12, 1861, sounded the death knell of slavery.

The President, Congress, military leaders and lesser individuals all had a part in events leading up to the Proclamation. Negro slaves took the first step by running away from their masters and seeking protection of Federal authorities. On May 23, 1861, a group of slaves took refuge within the lines of General Benjamin F. Butler near Fort Monroe, Virginia. On questioning the refugees the next morning General Butler found that they had been employed in erecting Confederate defenses. He immediately ruled that they were "contraband of war," because they had been used in military pursuits hostile to the United States. Hence, in Butler's view, they were subject to confiscation. He refused to return them to their owner but instead put them to work for the army. When their owner requested their return, under the terms of the fugitive slave law, Butler stated that this law did not apply to a foreign country, which Virginia then claimed to be. Butler's action was approved by General Winfield Scott and Secretary of War Simon Cameron, and an important precedent was set. The term "contraband" which Butler applied to these fugitives became a commonly used synonym for freedmen.

Another important preliminary to the Emancipation Proclamation was a law of Congress approved August 6, 1861, commonly known as the "first Confiscation Act." This law, which was introduced in the Senate by Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, provided for the seizure of property including slaves,

used by the owners' consent, in aiding or abetting insurrection against the United States. Slaves seized under the law were declared to be "forever free."

General John C. Frémont tried to advance the cause of freedom on August 30, 1861, by issuing a proclamation confiscating the property of all disloyal persons in Missouri and declaring their slaves free. President Lincoln learned about the proclamation from the newspapers. On September 2 the President wrote Frémont asking him to modify the proclamation so as to make it conform to the confiscation law of August 6. Frémont hoped to use anti-slavery sentiment to help extricate himself from the difficulties in which he had become involved as a military commander. Hence he refused to modify the proclamation unless specifically ordered to do so. Lincoln on September 11, 1861, directed Frémont to bring his proclamation into line with the law of Congress.

Lincoln had no desire to censure Frémont for his anti-slavery views or actions. Rather, he was fearful of the effect of the proclamation as originally issued on sentiment in Kentucky and other border states. On September 22, 1861, the President wrote Orville Browning: "The Kentucky Legislature would not budge till that proclamation was modified. . . . I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game."

On May 19, 1862, Lincoln had to check another forward general. David Hunter, commander of the Department of the South and a friend of Lincoln, on May 9, 1862, published a general order freeing the slaves of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. In issuing this order Hunter exceeded his authority. When the President read the order in the newspapers, he issued a proclamation annulling Hunter's action.

In the meantime, Lincoln had been trying to get the border slave states to accept compensated emancipation. In late November, 1861, the President drafted a plan for compensated emancipation at the rate of $400 per slave, to be passed by the Delaware legislature. This was a trial measure which Lincoln hoped would pave the way for similar action by other loyal slave states. But the Delaware legislators would not adopt the plan.

Congress on April 10, 1862, adopted a resolution, written by Lincoln, stating that the United States government ought to give financial aid to any state that would adopt a plan of gradual emancipation. Six days later a law was approved abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia with compensation at the rate of $300 for each slave. On June 19, 1862, a law was passed freeing the slaves in all federal territories without any compensation to the owners.

The President on July 12, 1862, appealed to the congressional delegations of the loyal border states urging them to use their influence in their respective states to obtain adoption of a plan of gradual, compensated emancipation. The President's recommendation of emancipation, in this instance as in others, contemplated colonization of the freedmen in Latin America. Lincoln told the senators and representatives that if the war continued long, the institution of slavery would be destroyed. Hence, the sensible thing for slaveowners to do was to take advantage of the government's generosity and accept compensated emancipation. But the President's efforts were futile. Only nine of the border state leaders came out in favor of the President's plan, while twenty expressed opposition to it.

July 17, 1862, was an important day in the history of events leading up to the first Proclamation. On this day two important laws were approved. The first, commonly known as the "Militia Act," authorized the President to receive into military service for labor, "or for any military or naval service for which they were found competent, persons of African descent." Slaves recruited under this act who belonged to disloyal persons were to receive their freedom, along with their mothers, wives, and children. The other law approved on July 17 was a very comprehensive measure called the "second Confiscation Act." Nicolay and Hay stated that it should have been called "an act to destroy slavery under the powers of war." The law contained a section freeing the slaves of all persons supporting the rebellion. This far-reaching enactment went beyond the Emancipation Proclamation, in that it declared free the slaves of *all* disloyal persons, and not just those living in areas in rebellion against the United States.

These events and laws show that increasing pressure was

being brought on President Lincoln in 1861 and 1862 to adopt emancipation as a war measure. Congress was moving faster than the President. The legislators were probably ahead of public sentiment, though emancipation almost certainly was gaining support among the people of the North in the summer of 1862.

* * *

From the time that the first fugitives entered the Federal lines, Lincoln wrestled often and earnestly with the problem of slavery and its bearing on the great conflict to preserve the Union. As the President deliberated and the war stretched from months to years, he heard many arguments pro and con on the subject of emancipation.

A principal objection to issuance of an emancipation proclamation was that it would violate a pledge in the Republican platform and Lincoln's repeated assurances not to interfere with slavery in the states. In his first inaugural address, Lincoln repeated a statement that he had made in the debate with Douglas at Ottawa, August 21, 1858: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

A second argument against issuance of the Proclamation was that it would alienate the loyal slave states, and many people believed that the support of these states was essential to Union victory. A third objection was that emancipation would chill the enthusiasm of Union Democrats and strengthen the peace element in the North. Still another argument was that a proclamation of emancipation would change the character of the conflict from a war to preserve the Union to a struggle for social reform. It was also contended that the North would be inundated with cheap labor, and that in the South slave insurrection and the horrors of Santo Domingo* would ensue.

* The reference is to a slave insurrection in Haiti, then called Saint Dominique. The revolt began on August 20, 1791. Within a few weeks 2,000 whites were massacred and more than 1,000 plantations destroyed. Ten thousand blacks died before the revolt was suppressed. Two years later France decreed the abolition of slavery in Saint Dominique.

The President also heard many arguments in favor of emancipation. Many Northern leaders declared that the enormous sin of slavery was too great a burden for the already overloaded Union to bear. William H. Herndon wrote to Senator Lyman Trumbull, November 20, 1861, after Lincoln's repudiation of the Frémont proclamation: "Good God! If I were Lincoln . . . I would declare that all slaves should be free. . . . Does Lincoln suppose he can squelch out this rebellion while he and the North in common are fighting for the status of slavery?"

Another argument for emancipation was that the freeing of the slaves would weaken the Confederacy. It would help lure from the South thousands of Negroes who were producing foodstuffs, working in factories and arsenals, erecting defenses, helping clothe soldiers and civilians, and otherwise sustaining the rebellion.

Some argued that emancipation would hearten the anti-slavery groups in the North and cause them to support the Northern cause more enthusiastically and effectively. Others contended that the freedmen could be taken into the army as laborers and soldiers and thus help ease the North's pressing manpower problem. Finally, there were many who held that the Proclamation would produce favorable results abroad, and this argument carried much weight, both with the President and his advisers. When Carl Schurz came home from Spain in January, 1862, he reported that the Union cause in Europe was suffering from failure of the government to come out boldly and clearly against slavery. Cassius M. Clay made a similar report when he returned from Russia in August, 1862. There was considerable apprehension in the North in the early months of 1862 that England, whose influence on other European nations was known to be great, was leaning toward recognition of the Confederacy. English firms were building ships for Southern use and selling arms to the Confederacy; leading statesmen, including Gladstone, Russell, and Palmerston, seemed to be cuddling up to the Confederacy. Charles Sumner and many other prominent Republicans were strongly of the opinion that avowal of freedom as a war aim by Lincoln would change this dangerous drift of events.

The President listened to all these arguments and there seems to be no doubt that he was influenced by them. The arguments were reinforced by pressures of various sorts.

The President was subjected to much political pressure, particularly from anti-slavery governors and members of Congress. Among the governors who were especially insistent that Lincoln proclaim emancipation were Richard Yates of Illinois, John A. Andrew of Massachusetts, Austin Blair of Michigan, and Samuel J. Kirkwood of Iowa. In the Senate two of the most persistent advocates of emancipation were Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Lyman Trumbull of Illinois. In January, 1862, Sumner, whom Lincoln liked and respected, wrote Andrew: "Let the doctrine of emancipation be proclaimed as an essential and happy agency in subduing the wicked rebellion." Governor Andrew did not need much encouragement.

Sumner also made frequent calls at the White House, personally to press his anti-slavery views on the troubled President. On July 4, 1862, he called twice at the White House, urging Lincoln "to reconsecrate the day by a decree of emancipation."

Late in the summer of 1862 the Northern governors decided to hold a meeting in Altoona, Pennsylvania, for the purpose of bringing pressure on the President. But Lincoln took some of the wind out of the sails of this movement by letting the leaders know ahead of time that the Proclamation was impending. When the governors met on September 24, they had no alternative but to endorse the Proclamation and rally behind the President.

Philanthropic and religious groups also exerted considerable pressure on the President. Various representatives of these groups called at the White House personally to present their petitions. Among those who called were Reverend William W. Patton and the Reverend John Dempster of Chicago who on September 13, 1862, presented to the President a memorial adopted by a public meeting of Christians of all denominations held in Bryan Hall, September 7, 1862. The two ministers also presented a similar memorial in German signed by the German citizens of Chicago. Both documents contained strong arguments for emancipation. When the ministers presented

them, they reinforced them with additional pleas of their own.

The liberal press also used its influence to get the President to come out for emancipation. Among the most forceful and persistent advocates of freedom were William Cullen Bryant's New York *Evening Post,* Joseph Medill's Chicago *Tribune* and Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune.* Greeley's famous editorial, "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," appeared in the issue of August 20, 1862. Publication of this editorial gave the President an opportunity, which he probably welcomed, of clarifying his position and preparing public sentiment for the Proclamation that he was soon to issue. In his reply to Greeley on August 22 the President let it be known that his paramount concern was to save the Union and that if it ever became apparent that emancipation would further this end, he would not hesitate to free the slaves.

Of all the pressures pushing the President toward emancipation that of military necessity was undoubtedly the most powerful. In the summer of 1862, when Lincoln made the decision to issue the Proclamation, the outlook for the North was very gloomy. The great flood of volunteering that had swept over the country in the weeks following Fort Sumter had dwindled to a trickle. McClellan's great offensive against Richmond had failed and disease and Confederate bullets had taken a terrible toll of men. Regiments were depleted to less than half their initial strength. "Stonewall" Jackson had thwarted three armies in the Shenandoah Valley and then slipped away to help Lee repulse McClellan before Richmond. Halleck had bogged down at Corinth. Bragg was concentrating his troops at Chattanooga for an invasion of Kentucky. A great stretch of the Mississippi River was still controlled by the Confederates and the iron ram *Arkansas* on July 15 defied two Federal fleets at Vicksburg. The Confederate cruiser *Sumter* under Raphael Semmes had taken seventeen prizes before being laid up at Gibraltar in April, 1862, and two English-built cruisers, the *Florida* and the *Alabama,* were about to begin their destructive raids on Federal shipping.

The North was suffering from disillusionment and war weariness and Lincoln was asking for large increments of troops. On July 3, 1862, he issued a call for 300,000 three-year

volunteers and on August a request went out for 300,000 nine-months militia. The state governors on whom the responsibility fell for raising the troops saw little prospect of getting them. One of the reasons that they were putting pressure on Lincoln to proclaim emancipation was to provide a larger pool of freedmen on which to draw to replenish the fighting forces. The Emancipation Proclamation was very closely tied to the recruiting of Negroes.

In the summer of 1862 Lincoln still would have preferred to follow a course of moderation and gradualism with respect to emancipation. His primary and predominant concern was still to restore the Union. But he had become convinced that freedom and Union were inextricably intertwined and that emancipation was a necessary step in saving the nation and proving to the skeptical monarchies of Europe that democracy would work. And when he reached this conclusion he decided to utilize his war power as commander-in-chief to proclaim the freedom of the slaves in the states that were forcibly trying to destroy the Union.

The overwhelming rejection, by the congressional delegations from the border states, of his plea of July 12, 1862 for gradual, compensated emancipation caused Lincoln to despair of his most favored mode of dealing with the problem of slavery.

Lincoln had always believed that slavery was wrong and he earnestly desired that all men everywhere might be free. But the President put his legal and constitutional obligations as Chief Executive above his personal beliefs and inclinations. He realized that the outbreak of war gave him power that he did not have in peace but he still was hesitant to use that power to interfere with slavery in the states. The one thing above all others that enabled him to overcome his constitutional scruples and proclaim emancipation was military necessity. The situation in the summer of 1862 had reached a point, as he later wrote Albert G. Hodges, that forced him to choose between "surrendering the Union and with it the Constitution or of laying a strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter." In sum, the conviction of "indispensable necessity" was the key that unlocked the door to emancipation in the

summer of 1862 and the emancipation proclaimed was "military emancipation," stemming from the President's war power as commander-in-chief.

* * *

Uncertainty exists as to the exact time that Lincoln decided to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Charles Eugene Hamlin in a biography of his grandfather, Hannibal Hamlin, stated that Lincoln told the Vice-President on June 18 that he was going to proclaim the freedom of the slaves. But this source apparently is the only authority for placing Lincoln's decision at so early a date.

On July 13, 1862, the President, while riding with Secretaries Seward and Welles to the funeral of Edwin Stanton's infant child, told the two cabinet members that he had about come to the conclusion that emancipation was absolutely essential to preserving the Union. Lincoln requested the comment of his two companions. Seward asked for time to think the matter over but stated that his present inclination was to agree that emancipation was justifiable, expedient, and necessary. Secretary Welles expressed a similar sentiment.

Apparently Lincoln had already begun to draft the Proclamation. For several weeks prior to July 22 he would slip away occasionally to the military telegraph room of the War Department. There, according to telegrapher Thomas T. Eckert, the President would write down a sentence or two, stop to gaze out the window, then write some more. In intervals between these visits, the draft of the Proclamation was kept in a drawer in the telegraph room.

On July 22, 1862, Lincoln read a draft of the preliminary Proclamation to the cabinet. Secretary Welles and Stanton spoke in favor of the measure. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair expressed the view that issuance of the Proclamation might have an unfavorable influence on the approaching fall elections. Secretary Salmon P. Chase declared himself in favor of the measure but stated the opinion that to avoid slave insurrections, emancipation should be announced by field commanders and that the generals should organize and arm

the Negroes. Secretary Seward objected that the time was unpropitious, owing to the unfavorable military situation. To avoid the appearance of the government stretching out its arms to Ethiopia, he advised waiting for a Northern victory. Impressed by Seward's view, Lincoln decided to hold up issuance of the Proclamation until a favorable turn of military events.

The history of the document itself, from the time that Lincoln read it to the cabinet until the issuance on September 22, is obscure. It was redrafted, but how many times is not known. John Hay stated in his diary that Lincoln rewrote the Proclamation "very carefully" on Sunday morning, September 21.

The story of the actual issuance of the Proclamation is best told by Salmon P. Chase in his diary. According to Chase, Lincoln assembled the cabinet about noon on Monday, September 22. At the beginning of the meeting the President, to relieve the tension, read from *Artemus Ward: His Book* a chapter entitled "High-handed Outrage in Utica." Then in serious vein he told the cabinet of making the decision while the Confederate army was at Frederick to issue the Proclamation when the invader should be driven back across the Potomac. "I said nothing to anyone," Chase records the President as saying, "but I made the promise to myself, and (hesitating a little)— to my Maker."

The President continued, according to Chase: "The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise. I have got you together to hear what I have written down. I do not wish your advice about the main matter—for that I have determined for myself. . . . If there is anything in the expressions I use, or in any other minor matter, which anyone of you thinks had best be changed, I shall be glad to receive the suggestions." Chase added that "the President then proceeded to read his Emancipation Proclamation, making remarks on the several parts as he went on, and showing that he had fully considered the whole subject in all the lights under which it had been presented to him."

Seward suggested some slight revisions which Lincoln accepted. The cabinet then adjourned and the Proclamation was released later in the day for publication.

The final draft of the preliminary Proclamation in Lincoln's handwriting is preserved in the New York State Library at Albany. The President's draft of the final Proclamation of January 1, 1863, which was deposited on loan at the Chicago Historical Society, was burned in the great fire of 1871.

The preliminary Proclamation contained a section stating the President's intention on the next meeting of Congress to renew the proposal of compensated emancipation and colonization on the American continent, with the consent of the colonists and the government of the country in which the colony was to be established. It also stated that Lincoln in due time would recommend that all citizens of the United States who had remained loyal throughout the rebellion should be compensated for all losses by acts of the United States including losses of slaves. But the most important part of the Proclamation was the third paragraph which stated that on January 1, 1863, "all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the final Proclamation, as scheduled, designating states and parts of states still in rebellion and declaring slaves in those areas forever free.

* * *

Reaction to the Proclamation varied greatly, even in the North. It was strongly denounced by some, particularly those of Democratic leanings, as extreme and unconstitutional, and a surrender of the President to the radical abolitionists.

A Democratic meeting in Springfield, Illinois, protested that the Proclamation was as "unwarrantable in military as in civil law; a gigantic usurpation at once converting the war,

professedly commenced by the Administration for the vindication of the authority of the Constitution, into a crusade for the sudden, unconditional and violent liberation of three million slaves." The Chicago *Times* of September 24, 1862, stated that the Proclamation would fire Southern resistance and protract the war indefinitely.

On September 28, 1862, Maria Lydig Daly, wife of a prominent Democrat of New York City, wrote in her diary: "Judge Pierrepont tells us that the President told him that the Emancipation Act was his own doing. The Cabinet were not consulted. . . . What supreme impertinence in the railsplitter of Illinois! . . . Father O'Reilly says we are under a worse despotism than they have in France or Russia. There is no law but the despotic will of poor Abe Lincoln, who is worse than a knave because he is the *cover* for every knave and fanatic who has the address to use him. Therefore we have not one devil, but many to contend with. Yet he only stands between us and internal revolution. It is terrible. God help our unhappy country."

A few Union officers resigned their army commissions in disgust. Lieutenant Charles W. Mann, Company B, 61st Illinois Regiment, on February 23, 1863, at Bolivar, Tennessee, wrote his superior: "Sir, I herewith respectfully tender to you the immediate and unconditional resignation of my commission . . . on account of being [dissatisfied] with the service and conduct of the present Administration and the Emancipation Proclamation of President A. Lincoln." Mann was dishonorably dismissed from the service by a general court-martial.

A number of enlisted men deserted. Others registered strong objections in their letters and diaries. Private A. Davenport of the 5th New York Regiment wrote his home-folk on September 25, 1862: "I came out to fight for the restoration of the Union & to keep slavery as it is . . . & not to free the niggers." Sergeant Onley Andrus of the 95th Illinois Regiment wrote his wife November 22, 1862: "I consider my life and the happiness of my family of more value than any Nigger." Private Joseph H. Diltz of Ohio wrote his father from Baltimore, January 9, 1863: "It is no use to fight for it does no

good and this thing of turning the damd Nigers loos I don't lik[e]."

Some Republicans, particularly those of the radical stripe, thought that the Proclamation did not go far enough. Governor Andrew of Massachusetts called the Proclamation "a poor document but a mighty act." The New York *World* stated: "The President has purposely made the Proclamation inoperative in all the places where we have gained a military footing which makes the slaves accessible. He has proclaimed emancipation only where he has notoriously no power to execute it."

On the other hand the Proclamation was warmly approved by many, with the strongest indorsement coming from the Republicans. Governor Austin Blair of Michigan wrote shortly after issuance of the preliminary Proclamation: "I rejoice to say that I can now with my whole heart support the administration and the President of the United States."

Corporal Rufus Kinsley of the 8th Vermont Regiment wrote in his diary, October 3, 1862: "Thank God, the word has at last been spoken. Light begins to break through. Let the sons of earth rejoice. Sing paens to Liberty. Let tyranny die." After issuance of the final Proclamation, Kinsley stated: "Because I love liberty and hate slavery . . . it gives me courage to face the enemy without trembling." Private Winthrop Allen of the 12th Illinois Cavalry Regiment wrote to a friend, October 16, 1862: "The 'Proclamation' meets with the approbation of every soldier I have spoken to on the subject. All say it will kill the rebellion sooner than anything else." Private Urich N. Parmelee of Connecticut wrote on March 29, 1863: "I do not intend to shirk now there is really something to fight for. I mean *Freedom*."

Probably only a minority of Northern civilians and soldiers were actively in favor of the preliminary Proclamation at the time it was issued. The Republican setbacks in the autumn elections of 1862, particularly in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, suggest considerable opposition to emancipation, although war weariness and many other factors undoubtedly influenced these results.

However, sentiment gradually changed with the passing of time and many who had initially been opposed to emancipation

came to see its benefits. The change was illustrated in the instance of Sergeant Eli Pickett of Minnesota who wrote his wife on March 27, 1863: "I have never been in favor of the abolition of slavery until since this war has determined me in the conviction that it is a greater sin than our Government is able to stand—and now I go in for a war of emancipation and I am ready and willing to do my share of the work."

As the conviction grew that the policy announced by Lincoln was helping to crush the rebellion, popular support of the Proclamation increased correspondingly. There can be no doubt that in the long run the Proclamation gave a decided boost to Northern morale.

Southern whites were infuriated by the Proclamation. They called it "Lincoln's Vermillion Edict" and "The Nigger Stealing Proclamation," and Lincoln they denounced as a "fiend," "usurper," and "tyrant." The Richmond *Enquirer* of October 1,1862 stated: "Butler has been called infamous . . . but Butler is a saint as compared to his master. In addition to all that Butler authorized, Lincoln adds butchery, even the butchery of babes."

The reaction of the slaves was in marked contrast to that of their masters. To the Negroes the Proclamation was an answer to fervent prayer. The slaves learned about the Proclamation through the "grapevine" remarkably soon after it was issued. House servants, some of whom were literate, obtained newspapers containing the Proclamation and read Lincoln's pronouncement to their fellows in secret meetings held after night in the cabins. Bishop Isaac Lane of Jackson, Tennessee, in 1932 told this writer that the only thing he remembered stealing in his whole life was a copy of the newspaper containing the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. When the Proclamation was issued, Lane was a slave on a western Tennessee plantation and one of his daily chores was to pick up the mail at the local post office. Lane concealed the paper containing the preliminary Proclamation and told his master that it did not come. Later in the day he got word around among his fellow slaves that he had important information for them and that they should assemble in a specified cabin that night to hear it. After dark the Negroes met, posted a sentry

to see that they were not detected by the white folk and listened to Lane's reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. They greeted the glad tidings with great rejoicing.

The Proclamation induced many slaves to flee from bondage and it may have impelled others to labor less diligently for their masters and to act as informers and guides for the invaders. Most slaves earnestly desired to be free. The alacrity with which they seized freedom when it came within their reach showed that they had been eargerly awaiting the coming of the kingdom and the day of jubilee.

Reaction abroad was as varied as in America. Many English newspapers belittled the Proclamation. The London *Times* of October 14, 1862 stated: "The Emancipation Proclamation is an incitement to assassination. In truth it is nothing else, and can mean nothing else." The Edinburgh *Review* termed the Proclamation Lincoln's "cry of despair." *Blackwood's Magazine* called it "monstrous, reckless, devilish." Apparently most of the English newspapers regarded the Proclamation as a military measure designed to weaken the South. Even the strongly anti-slavery *Spectator* declared that the Proclamation was "a hopeful gesture made in response to military pressure and with little concession to principle." "The principle," according to the *Spectator*, "is not that a human being cannot justly own another but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States."

The laboring people of England from the beginning strongly approved the measure. Between December, 1862, and March, 1863, more than fifty public meetings in major cities of England and Ireland drew up resolutions endorsing emancipation. Charles Francis Adams forwarded these to the United States. With the batch that he mailed on February 19, 1863, he sent a note to Seward stating: "The current of popular sentiment flows with little abatement of strength."

On February 13, 1863, Richard Cobden, one of the workingmen's champions, wrote his friend, Charles Sumner: "You know how much alarmed I was from the first lest our government should interpose in your affairs. . . . This state of feeling existed up to the announcement of the President's Emancipation Policy. From that moment our old anti-slavery

feeling began to arouse itself, and it has been gathering strength ever since."

In France, Spain, and Russia sentiment was at first divided, with some newspapers favoring the Proclamation and others criticizing it. But in these countries, as in England, sentiment generally passed from an attitude of skepticism and opposition to one of appreciation and approval. The Proclamation was of great importance in strengthening the Union cause in England and in Europe in general. It removed what little likelihood remained of European intervention to help the Confederates gain their independence.

* * *

What was the importance of the Proclamation? It had some obvious shortcomings. In the first place it was dictated primarily not by humanitarian or philanthropic considerations, but by military necessity. The Proclamation *was* in large measure a cry of despair, a stretching out of arms to Ethiopia, to obtain colored troops, to weaken the South, and to gain support for the drooping Union cause at home and abroad.

It did not grant freedom to *all* slaves. Those in the loyal border states, in Tennessee, and in the occupied portions of Louisiana and Virginia were left in bondage. There was truth in Lord John Russell's statement to James Lyons, the British ambassador to the United States, January 17, 1863: "It professes to emancipate all slaves in places where the United States authorities cannot exercise any jurisdiction . . . but it does not decree emancipation . . . in any State or parts of States occupied by federal troops . . . and where, therefore, emancipation . . . might have been carried into effect. . . . There seems to be no declaration of a principle adverse to slavery in this proclamation."

These shortcomings should not obscure the fact that the Emancipation Proclamation was a momentous pronouncement. It was an important step toward extension of the principles of the Declaration of Independence to members of the

colored race. Roger B. Taney, in the Dred Scott decision, and Douglas, in the famous debates with Lincoln, had contended that Jefferson and his compatriots were referring only to white people when they wrote in the great Declaration that "all men are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights, [including] . . . Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Taney, Douglas, and others also claimed that Negroes were not citizens of the United States. Lincoln held contrary views, and in the debates with Douglas he repeated and emphasized the argument that Negroes were comprehended by the Declaration of Independence, and that some of them were citizens of the United States from the time of the adoption of the Constitution.

Though the Emancipation Proclamation did not free the slaves in areas controlled by the Federals, Lincoln and all thinking people knew full well that Union victory and the establishment of freedom by force of arms in the cotton kingdom would spell the doom of slavery throughout the United States.

The Proclamation was important also because it recognized Negroes as *Americans*. It was tied to the policy of making soldiers out of freedmen, and this connection was of the greatest importance.

The Proclamation broadened the North's war aims to Union *and freedom,* and it paved the way for permanent identification of the American nation with liberty and freedom for all men everywhere. It undergirded the principles of the Declaration of Independence. It became an important link in the chain stretching from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States to the Fourteen Points and the Atlantic Charter—the chain of freedom, democracy, and equality.

Moreover, the Proclamation announced to the world, in a dramatic way, that emancipation was a major war aim of the North, and that the full force of the executive branch of the government and the military might of the nation would be invoked to achieve and guarantee freedom. The laws of July 17, 1862, as previously noted, had authorized as much freedom as did the Emancipation Proclamation. But these laws were not known to the world; and until the Emancipation

Proclamation publicized them, and put the nation's enormous strength and prestige behind them, they had been of relatively little effect.

Finally, the Proclamation was an important milestone in the growth of Abraham Lincoln. In his earlier years, Lincoln had regarded Negroes as inferior beings, though he had some Negro friends, among them "Billy the Barber," of Springfield, whose shop was Lincoln's "second home." Lincoln referred to colored folk as "niggers" and told jokes which represented them as comic, childlike characters. He was opposed to giving Negroes the ballot and accepting them as social equals. In the early part of the war he was against taking them into the army. On September 13, 1862, he told the two Chicago ministers: "If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms would be in the hands of the rebels." But after he accepted the necessity of making soldiers out of Negroes and freeing them, he followed very closely their performance in battle. Their heroism at Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend convinced him that they deserved not only to be free but also to have the right to vote. In January, 1864, he wrote General James Wadsworth: "In assisting to save the life of the Republic, they have demonstrated in blood their right to the ballot."

This was a far cry from the Lincoln who had said in the debates with Douglas in 1858: "I am not nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the black and white races . . . [or] of making voters or jurors of Negroes."

In terms of present day ideas of race in the enlightened part of the world, the President in 1862, and later, still had a long way to go. But in view of all that we know about this remarkable man, this greatest of all Americans—his devotion to democracy, his love of liberty, his concern for the lowly, his compassion for the oppressed, and his capacity for growth —it seems reasonable to assume that, had it been possible for him to observe the achievement of the colored folk in our time, he would freely and gladly have accorded them the full rights of human beings and American citizens.

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